



VIENNA CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE HOUSING:

Promoting access to affordable and decent housing through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing

International Conference

12-13 April 2018, Vienna

Concept Note – draft version 21 February 2018

Organisers: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and City of Vienna

Languages: English, German and Russian

Introduction

While cities are powerful engines of economic development, the rapid growth of the urban population resulted in enormous challenges. Ageing and a drastic increase in the international migration flows in the UNECE region brought changes in demand and more pressure on infrastructure and social services. Moreover, increased urban expansion has drastically reduced the land available for other uses. Climate change and natural disasters have caused vast economic and social losses and strengthened the need for cities to be resilient. These and other factors in the context of the post-financial crisis amplify the challenges related to the limited access to affordable, adequate and healthy housing and basic infrastructure for all.

Under the umbrella of the intergovernmental [UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management](#), member States exchange experiences and best practices in order to address these complex challenges in their respective countries. In 2014, the Committee agreed on the [Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing](#). The Charter is a non-legally binding document that aims to support member States as they seek to ensure access to decent, adequate, affordable and healthy housing for all. The Charter scope is to improve the sustainability of housing in the ECE region through effective policies and actions at all levels, supported by international cooperation, in order to contribute to sustainable development in the region. The Charter binds itself to four overarching principles: environmental protection; economic effectiveness; social inclusion and participation; and cultural adequacy.

The Charter principles support the implementation of [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), including the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 11 to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and [the New Urban Agenda](#). The



2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development is a global plan of action to promote sustainable development adopted by UN Member States in September 2015. The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) held from 17 to 20 October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador; and then endorsed by the UN General Assembly. The New Urban Agenda supports the implementation of urban related SDGs and highlights the important role of cities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other global accords.

In 2016, the Committee adopted the [guidelines for the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing](#), including terms of reference for the establishment of Geneva UN Charter Centres (ECE/HBP/2016/2).¹ Based on these guidelines, [Geneva UN Charter Centres](#) were established in Albania, Estonia and the United Kingdom in 2016 and 2017 in cooperation with relevant authorities and key stakeholders. Several more centres are in the process of being established in countries of the UNECE Region. The Centres support the implementation of the Charter through active dissemination of information on the Charter and its principles (e.g. publications, media outreach, and national and local events); by organising capacity building and networking activities; providing advisory services to stakeholders, regional and local authorities; and by conducting relevant studies.

To support efforts of the governments and stakeholders to promote access to affordable and decent housing and to implement the above mentioned policy documents, the Committee focuses on the following priority areas:

- Energy efficiency in buildings
- Housing finance
- Housing management (management of multiapartment buildings)
- Promoting awareness and capacity building.

During 2018-2019, the UNECE will develop guidance on aligning activities of the Committee on Housing and Land Management with the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda; continue its support to the work of the Joint Task Force on Energy Efficiency Standards in Buildings; and will elaborate innovative regional studies and guidance documents on housing finance and on management of multiapartment buildings in cooperation with international experts, which will provide methodological support to the implementation of the Charter. Simultaneously, UNECE, in cooperation with its Geneva UN Charter Centres and relevant partner organisations, will develop and launch an integrated training programme on the implementation of the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing aimed at developing capacity of decision-makers and housing practitioners at the national and local level.

Conference objectives

The Conference will discuss the progress of achieving access to affordable and decent housing for all through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing by national governments, local

¹ Available at www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/documents/2016/ECE_HBP_2016_2.en.pdf

authorities and relevant stakeholders. The Conference will also include presentations on best practices for the implementation of these agreements at national, local and international levels.

Conference organisers and logistics

The Conference is organised by the City of Vienna and the UNECE Committee on Housing and Land Management, including its Real Estate Market Advisory Group (REM) with the support of Urban Innovation in Vienna (UIV) and Partners for Urbanism and Sustainable Housing (PUSH).

The Conference will be held on 12 April at the UN premises in Vienna, Conference Room 4; and on 13 April at the City Hall of Vienna (The Rathaus).

For more information, please contact:

At the UNECE in Geneva:

Ms. Gulnara Roll, Head of Housing and Land Management Unit, at

E-mail: roll@un.org

In Vienna:

Mr. Wolfgang Förster, Coordinator IBA Wien International Building Exhibition

E-mail: Wolfgang.foerster@wien.gv.at